



Lenin

## Class Society and the State

The first chapter from "[The State and Revolution](#)" is attached, and downloadable from the link below. Lenin wrote the book between the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia, and the October 1917 proletarian revolution.

The October Revolution dramatically interrupted his writing, leaving the work unfinished.

SACP First Deputy General Secretary Jeremy Cronin has remarked that South Africa is in some ways stuck “between February and October”, meaning to compare our SA situation during the 20 years since 1994 with the eight months in 1917 between the two Russian revolutions.

The urgency of Lenin's revolutionary purpose is apparent from the first paragraph, as is the priority he gives to the understanding of The State as a product of, and integral to, the exploitative class-divided social system that the Bolsheviks were determined to overthrow, and therefore a matter of the highest revolutionary priority.

Hence the first words are a definition and a challenge to those who would think otherwise: *"The State: a Product of the Irreconcilability of Class Antagonisms"*

In the first paragraph Lenin refers to the embracing of "Marxism" by the respectable bourgeoisie, and their pleasure at the amenability of "the labour unions which are so splendidly organized for the purpose of waging a predatory war!"

The world war that was raging at the time was not merely an incidental background to the Russian Revolutions of 1917. As with the lethal global neo-liberalism of today, the warmongers had seduced the major part of the social-democratic organisations that claimed to represent the working class.

The organised structures of the working class had turned against the working class. If this had not happened, the First World War would have been impossible. The crux of the matter was the question, then as now, of The State.

Lenin is unequivocal:

*“The state is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonism objectively cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.”*

Lenin proceeds to write that the overthrow of the bourgeois state has to be direct and forcible, whereas the withering-away of the proletarian state can only be the indirect consequence of the progressive disappearance of class antagonism during the transitional period called socialism. "The State and Revolution" goes to the very heart of the revolutionary theory of class struggle, sharpens all contradictions, and draws clear lessons - lessons that are still relevant today, and especially in South Africa.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [State and Revolution, C1, Class Society and The State, Lenin](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).